

STATE OF NEW YORK)
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COUNTY OF ROCKLAND)

5. Suddenly losing a center piece of your daily rhythm, no longer having access to a place you feel you belong, can be stressful for most adults. But especially for a child. And, we would say,

particularly in the midst of adolescence - when your peers and your sense of self outside your family are solidifying. Our daughter has felt isolated, anxious about returning after being gone, anxious about not being able to ever return, and deeply missing her connection to her class. She has a strong relationship with her current teacher, Elizabeth Hall, and this is especially sad to see lost.

6. We have applied, for next year, to a school outside the excluded zip codes, and hope that she is accepted (the class is fairly full). But our daughter is understandably struggling now with feelings about spending her last year of middle school in a new school, and then moving again to a new high school. The exclusion has worn her down, and lessened her confidence. She is a child who is supported by steadiness. She feels like she lost her friends without realizing what was happening, without any choice. She says everything is different now. She is a fantastic and resilient child - and still, we see her grief and how she struggles with the irrationality of it all. At one point, when V. was dropping off homework at the school, she became intensely stressed about her mother even walking onto the campus - she wasn't sure if V. was allowed.

7. And, this irrationality is an impactful and important piece. Our daughter doesn't have the measles. If she did, we would have quarantined her at home immediately. Neither of us has the measles; nor does anyone at the school. We go grocery shopping, to museums, into pharmacies, and parks, and music lessons and coffee shops and restaurants - where anyone could have the measles. Nothing is being tracked in these spaces. This is why we conclude this is irrational.

8. And, yet, our daughter is *not allowed* to go into her class and learn, in a place and community where parents would alert and report any case, she is not allowed to go.

9. And, then the DOH reaches further. Not only is our daughter excluded from school, but these children who are not ill in any way are not permitted to gather and be tutored by any Green Meadow teacher on or *off* campus. This was amazing to us, that the health department can so significantly limit our child's ability to continue her education - when they are not doing anything (beyond a public message to stay home) to connect with the communities and families in which measles is actually occurring and spreading in this outbreak. Ironically, if she'd developed the measles, she would have immunity, and with a positive titer test, have been able to return to school by now.

9. We have such anger about this. Here we were with a group of children, trying to continue some semblance of class life, in the home of one of the parents. We had managed to find 2 teachers at the school who wanted to volunteer 2 hours a week. And, on the day we were meeting, this was denied. The school refused it because the health department threatened the school with non-compliance. The defendant says that school faculty can only tutor children individually.

10. This may sound simple. We can tell you - it is not. After 3 months, we are still struggling with the time, cost and effort of creating a weekly schedule that is a full educational experience for our daughter, while still paying her full tuition so that she may remain enrolled and return if the exclusion is lifted. Not being allowed to pool resources, not being able to keep those children who are excluded together, or to maximize the time of Green Meadow teachers willing to volunteer feels like such an overreach of power. And, this is happening within a community of considerable resources. I cannot imagine the impact on those who have much less support.

11. The logic of refusing to allow children who are completely

healthy to continue to be educated by Green Meadow teachers off school grounds *fails* - when those teachers and in-school children, and families of both, are moving freely in all local and public spaces - when both the excluded children and those still in school see each other on weekends as we try to keep them connected to their friends - *the logic fails*.

12. And, what is left is the reality that we are not able to educate our children in ways that the law allows. The Department of Education has not helped. Local and state lawmakers avoid the issue of vaccination because it is politically charged. And, what becomes more and more evident is that this is a tactic to force people to vaccinate their children. They are intentionally limiting our ability to educate our children easily and fully as a punitive response to our religious choice.

13. And, now they have effectively removed our religious exemptions. While this may be with the intention of protecting public health, and seem like the correct position to many - I am uncomfortably reminded of the numerous times in history the position of the social majority did not end up being the path of more integrity or lesser harm.

14. We believe very much in facing situations head on, in remaining open and curious and awake. Don't think for a moment that we are not concerned about the risks of measles. We fully understand the need to stem the spread, and the significant risk to certain populations. We take these risks very seriously. But this is a complex situation that requires both protection of individual rights and religious freedom and the actual, and effective protection, of public health. The response by our health department is doing neither.

15. Instead, they are relying on disruption tactics to increase vaccination rates to 100%. But if you listen to some of the

pediatricians, researchers, and advocates for informed consent at public Senate hearings around the country right now - you will hear that the majority of the children developing measles in this outbreak have been fully vaccinated. This is important to listen to. In part, because it's not being widely reported - the vaccine industry has a very powerful lobby.

16. But more so, because this question of how vaccinated children are contributing to the outbreak *must* be independently addressed. Because these changes being proposed in our State and Federal laws - the removal of exemptions, narrowing of religious protections, and the push for state mandates that compromise choice and informed consent - are based on the premise that the vaccines will end the outbreaks. And, there is a significant amount of compelling evidence to warrant a much closer look.

17. We chose Green Meadow Waldorf School for our daughter (13yr) in no small part because of the anthroposophical perspectives on health attributed to Rudolph Steiner. His understandings of the body reflect our own beliefs that medical care cannot be one size fits all - that bodies are wide ranging, in how they respond to environments and to whatever (food, medicine, matter) they take in.

18. I, V., was raised in a family with a number of physicians. My father is a physician, my mother was a nurse. My grandfather and my uncle, both doctors. My great uncle, a fairly renowned breast surgeon from NY. My brother is an anesthesiologist. My sister is a nurse. When my daughter was two, a neurosurgeon saved her life. And, recently my mother died after a 15-year struggle with cancer, during which spans she was intimately bound to the health care system. I say all this only because it is through these relationships with family working in, and receiving care from, the medical system, that my understandings about the benefits, limitations and politics of medicine gradually formed. And, over

time, my sense that medicine cannot be responsibly or safely mandated has been confirmed, particularly when there is no liability, as in the case of vaccines. Ethical medicine must always involve informed consent and choice.

19. Our decision not to vaccinate our daughter is two-fold: a) it is rooted in our strong beliefs about how our body, mind and soul interacts. These beliefs are both spiritual and practical. They inform why we believe we are here (existential questions) and how we can most fully and responsibly live (life supporting practices). Our beliefs grew from our parents' religious grounds, but were primarily shaped by our life experience. Our spiritual understandings were not handed down, but have been hard won - inside and outside of churches and sacred spaces, amidst life challenges. And, it is through our deeply personal, spiritual beliefs and sense of responsibility that we decided not to vaccinate our daughter; b) Our decision is additionally informed by our daughter's diagnosis, at age 2, of hydrocephalus. She had significant swelling around her brain and required immediate surgery. A VP shunt was placed at that time, and she has had no symptoms since. But the absence of adequate assurance that she's not more susceptible to an adverse vaccine reaction resulting in neurological swelling, combined with the lack of liability of the vaccine companies, affirms our choice not to vaccinate her.

20. We are concerned about the push in NY State to remove religious exemption. The protection of religious exemption is not primarily about vaccination. It is concerned with ensuring that we are able to make choices about our body, about medical interventions and care that align with our beliefs and values throughout our life - from birth to death. We cannot understand why any state, or person, would consider giving this protection up, no matter the position held on vaccines.

21. Religious freedom is a constitutional right that

acknowledges our diversity of culture, worship, faith, and practice - in body and in spirit. And, we feel daily the threat and stress of this being taken.

22. We have felt exhausted, anxious and angry throughout these three months. We have both had to turn down work and organize our time and days in significantly different and uncomfortable ways. Our stress levels have been very high, and this has affected the level of peace in our family. It has diminished our sense of trust in our basic freedoms, and in the channels of response we have available to us to people in leadership to be heard. Many seem to be in a mode of defense or attack. The aggression comes from the top down. From the World Health Org. through the CDC, through the media, state lawmakers, the NY DOH, and from other parents.

23. Less than 1% of New York children are unvaccinated or under-vaccinated. The amount of power, speech, and money being directed toward the small number of us who have filed religious exemptions, or are questioning this practice, is concerning to us on so many levels. It is stunning to both of us that, even if confident in one's position on vaccines, we all would not pause to address compelling concerns of risk and harm before pushing for state mandates! Before compromising our religious freedoms without thorough imagination and thought of how this could impact future circumstances that have nothing to do with vaccination. Before realizing that we are diminishing our right to care for ourselves, our loved ones, our children in ways that honor our deepest beliefs about life when religious exemption is removed.

24. The idea that NY state can mandate an injection into our child's body against our beliefs, values and wishes in order for her to receive an education brings into question our most basic of protections. And, the requirement, without consequence, by the NY Department of Health of an intervention that's recognized as

"unavoidably unsafe" by the U.S. Supreme Court in order to attend a school that reflects our spiritual beliefs and honors our religious exemption, where there is not, and has not been, a single case of measles - feels like strong-arming and overreach.

25. *Finally, one of the most basic human rights is that of bodily autonomy - as supported by Nuremburg Code. When there is risk, there must be choice. Ethical medicine requires completely voluntary and informed consent, yet there continues to be a concerted effort to push mandatory vaccines on every person.*

V.M.

V.M.

Signed and sworn to before me this 5th day of March 2019.

M.H.S.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires:

MICHAEL HOWARD SUSSMAN
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 02SU6332584
Qualified in Orange County
Commission Expires Nov. 09, 2019

A.M.

A.M.

Signed and sworn to before me this 5th day of March 2019.

D.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires:

MICHAEL HOWARD SUSSMAN
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 02SU6332584
Qualified in Orange County
Commission Expires Nov. 09, 2019